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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003474

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2029

TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV CH

SUBJECT: CHARGE MEETS WITH DISSIDENT'S WIFE

REF: A. BEIJING 3443
B. BEIJING 3373
C. BEIJING 3321
D. BEIJING 3081
E. BEIJING 1734
F. 08 BEIJING 4493

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Robert Goldberg. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a December 28 meeting with Liu Xia, wife of convicted Charter 08 author Liu Xiaobo, the Charge expressed concern about Liu Xiaobo's safety and noted the U.S. and other countries had called for his immediate release. He said Liu Xiaobo would not be forgotten and would be uppermost in our human rights agenda. Liu Xia expressed appreciation for the attention given to her husband's case. She confirmed that her husband would appeal his conviction and eleven-year prison sentence. She worried that he might be sent to a prison far outside of Beijing, making visitation difficult and requested that we ask that he remain in Beijing. End Summary.

12. (C) On December 28, the Charge d'Affaires met Liu Xia, the wife of convicted Charter 08 drafter Liu Xiaobo, to assure that the United States would continue to raise her husband's case with the Chinese government and call for his release. The Charge told Liu Xia that the United States would likely raise Liu Xiaobo's case at the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue in February 2010. The Charge also expressed concern for Liu Xia, her personal safety and health, during this difficult time and reiterated the willingness of Embassy Beijing and the USG to support to husband and wife. (Note: Liu Xiaobo was sentenced December 25 to 11 years in prison for "inciting subversion of state power.")

13. (C) Liu Xia expressed appreciation for the international communities' interest in Liu Xiaobo's case. She contrasted the recent high-level of attention to Liu's previous incarceration (1996 to 1999), when authorities allowed very little information about Liu to leak to the outside world. She noted that on December 23, during Liu's trial, many reporters, Chinese supporters and foreign diplomats had gone to the courthouse, even though they could not attend the trial. Liu confirmed that although she was unable to attend the trial December 23, government authorities did allow her to attend the verdict reading and sentencing December 25. The morning of the sentencing, she said, police took her directly from her home to the courthouse and back, using an entrance away from the media. Although pessimistic about the chances of an appeal leading to a reduction of Liu's eleven-year sentence, Liu Xia said that he would appeal the conviction. (Note: Liu Xiaobo's lawyer told PolOff December 28 that they would meet with Liu Xiaobo in jail to make the final decision on whether to appeal.) Liu Xia told the Charge that her primary concern, however, was that following a failed appeal Liu Xiaobo would be sent to a prison facility outside Beijing, thereby making it impossible for her to visit him. She said this was a common method Chinese

authorities use to "torment" ("zhe mo") the families of dissidents. She asked that, at an appropriate time, we weigh in with the authorities to keep him in the Beijing area.

¶14. (C) Liu also confirmed that she was able to have a 10-minute meeting with her husband immediately following the sentencing hearing, their first meeting since March 20. Liu Xia said that Liu Xiaobo had not been mistreated or abused while in prison. According to Liu Xia, Liu Xiaobo was sharing a cell with four other prisoners and was able to exercise for one hour each day. However, Liu Xia complained that of the 100 plus books she had given to jail officials to pass to Liu Xiaobo, her husband had received only about 30. She also said that she was barred from sending any letters to her husband. During the meeting, Liu Xia said Liu Xiaobo looked a bit "swollen" in the face. She expressed concern for his health and said that medicine she had sent to him for a chronic stomach problem had not been delivered.

¶15. (C) Liu reported that the level of security around her remained at the same level since Liu Xiaobo had been detained in December 2008. She was still able to move freely, leave home, accept media interviews and meet with diplomats. Security forces had not yet explicitly told her not to undertake any of these activities. (Note: During the Charge's meeting with Liu Xia, PolOff observed two plain-clothes security officials in the hotel garden photographing the meeting with a telephoto lens.) She said she regularly received calls from supporters in the United States and Hong Kong. Liu said the Internet connection in her apartment, which was cut in the summer, had yet to be restored, though friends were helping her set up a wireless

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connection. Liu Xia said some supporters were urging the couple to seek asylum in the United States, however, Liu Xia said that Liu Xiaobo did not want to go to the United States or into exile; doing so would "cause many people in China to lose hope." Liu Xia said she and her husband both agreed that he could better assist China from within China, rather than from the United States.

¶16. (C) In response to a question about whether international attention had helped or hindered her husband, Liu said it had been helpful and she urged the United States to continue its advocacy on his behalf. The international community, she said, should not allow the Chinese government to sentence Liu to eleven years without comment. The Charge assured her that the USG stood ready to provide any additional assistance that might be needed and urged her to stay in close contact with the Embassy.

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